

KENIA : Halbjähriges Praktikum 01.04.19 bis 30.09.19 im sozialen Unternehmen IBURU COFFEE (www.iburucoffee.com)

I decided to write the report in English to also be used on Ibúru Coffee webpage and the international Ibúru volunteer program – although it might not be sure how soon it can be opened to new volunteers. There are some changes that have to be made now after the loss of operational manager and co-founder late Carlfred Mugendi in August 2019. Therefore the program might be closed for some time due to that company-internal reason.

Why Kenya and Ibúru Coffee social enterprise?

Since my first stay in Kenya back in 2017, I knew my heart has found its place here. The mentality that there is still a lot of potential for this developing country brings a great motivation and endless opportunities. Compared to Germany where we already have maximised on our standard of living and a level of luxury is considered as normal, most energy I feel is invested in maintaining that lifestyle. Whereas in a country that is not yet fully developed, there is more space for creation and everyone can participate in developing to one's own talents. That environment is supporting the own process of self-reflection and discovering my interests and talents.

To give an example: I was listening to a conversation where a white person asked a Kenyan if he would take a job to earn money even if he wouldn't like the task he would need to do. The answer was NO. And that from my experience is, what most Kenyans would say, even if they are looking for work, most people aim at not accepting a job that doesn't go with their interests. Of course there are exceptions, but overall it gives another bigger picture. That attitude towards embracing one's own happiness above giving away all lifetime for an unsatisfying job for the money and security an employment brings is inspiring. I see a difference in how high the demand for security and consistency is as in where each culture is settled.

It is a great chance same as challenge to define the own job when there are no precise step to step guidelines and expectations but a global goal to be fulfilled over time, where therefore the way to get there is completely up to oneself. That demands a high level of self-management.

During my volunteer work with AIESEC in Nairobi 2017 and another self-organized practical internship as systemic consultant in social work for the organization Community Transformers Kenya 2018, many close friendships developed that gave me motivation to go back to Nairobi for a longer period of time to intensify our together projects. That team of local people made it way more easy for me to be accepted in the local communities, learning the cultural rules and was a security-factor as well.

It was great to connect people and integrate many people in my internship work. We got new ideas for the social-engagement concept by also discussing that ideas with another founder of a Kenyan non-profit organization (Heart of Serving) following the same structures (as in characterising the company beyond their product / income generating activities by their social impact and an educational message).

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There are many linking points between my studies and the internship at Ibúru Coffee:

Beginning with my focus in social psychology/political psychology where my degree thesis was a field study analysing ethnical discrimination in Germany, possible reasons and counter-measurements. The practical use of my skills as systemic consultant in social work and a basic knowledge in aggression free communication which I have both qualified in before doing the master. The first semester master-seminars about language and attention intercultural same as the topics in health-psychology seminar.

Supervision and job description:

„ Although we are unable to pay wages to our Work Experience Programme participants, we do offer free meals and accommodation on the farm. We are also happy to work with any educational institution to ensure that you receive credit for this position if possible. The working language for our participants is English. “

I had the privilege of a two-to-one supervision by Mrs. Gakii Mugendi and for the psychological background by Dr. Annelie Rothe-Wulf from the psychological department of Freiburg University. Mrs. Gakii Mugendi and I were discussing my work, planning and evaluating whenever needed, at least once a week. That regular feedback made my work most effective. On the other hand, it required high flexibility from my side as we were creating my exact tasks each week, including working on the weekends when necessary, for example events, which didn't give me a structured plan in advance. Due to the variety of tasks, each weeks schedule would be different.

According to the description, my job was to offer support as a psychologist to farmers and their kids through various community events and awareness forums:

„Since Iburu operates as a social enterprise, we also aim to integrate psychological knowledge to our farmers and consumers. Having you as an international member of our team thus, your knowledge in psychology could help to create an understanding between our coffee farmers and consumers thereby managing expectations of a diverse culture. We also appreciate that you'll be able to offer support as a psychologist to our farmers and their kids through various community events and awareness forums. “

My approach had to be adapted after August as Carlfred Mugendi, the father of my host family, passed away. The System had to find new coping-strategies and roles to now step in for his work. Therefore, the last planned events for many visitors to be invited couldn't take place as planned, instead there was more individual psychological support needed - which, from a professional point of view, is in so far difficult, as I myself as part of the host family for some months already was personally involved and thereby not neutral.

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Since there was no regular dayplan or weekplan, I would instead outline these different stages as work description during my internship:

(a) OBSERVE and DEVELOP IDEAS :

Starting with adapting to the new environment, culture, people and understanding the spirit of Ibúru Coffee Social Enterprise. That baseline I think was important, reconnecting again on a personal level. From there on, creating ideas on which interventions could be helpful to implement my goals as outlined in my job description.

(b) DEVELOPING THEORETICAL CONCEPT :

The concept has three aspects: a product that generates income (long-time goal: online Shop and sell-stations in different countries), an educational message (long-time goal: finding sponsors for a research centre to spreading the knowledge of organic farming and conservation), a social community impact (strengthen the rural community by enrichment of activities and taking care of their mental well-being, making their life on the farm more attractive, especially for young people)

(c) PRACTICAL REALIZATION :

Based on that theoretical concept, I was organizing the programs that we were to implement and create connections to a team of people needed for such: Ibúru Coffee brand t-shirts were designed and printed and the homepage was rewritten based on a new concept to support the online presence and marketing. To create an understanding between coffee farmers and coffee consumers (international clients of Ibúru coffee), we created an intercultural exchange/ the real African Experience to host guests on the farm and let them roast their own coffee to experience the process behind the product. Especially for our farmers and their families, we built community empowerment programs, mostly hosting art and sport events that were also documented in pictures and videos.

(d) INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT :

With a more developed trust base and being more known to the community, in hard times of losses the system had to find new coping-strategies and roles. In those situations, the community free-time events became less important and a new strategy of support was needed that took care of the individual struggles, feelings and needs.

(e) A SMOOTH ENDING :

After six months of sharing many private moments, it was most important to me to end all programs to not leave behind an open work. Also the personal goodbyes due to going back to Germany for everyone to not feel dropped.

(f) DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION :

It was important to document the full process so that the concepts can be opened again and are not bound to one person. Also the work needed to be discussed and evaluated throughout the internship and especially as a resume afterwards to see which aspects worked as planned and which changes and adaptations could be learned from and reflected on.

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Would Iburu Coffee be a good choice for your internship?

A big plus was the freedom and trust I was given within my work. I experienced it as most fruitful that my boss was giving me the freedom of decision-making within the range of my profession as psychologist and consultant and still evaluate and feedback the ongoing in regular together conversations. It was a necessity that I already knew, have visited and supported Iburu Coffee since 2017 when Mrs. Gakii Mugendi was in Kenya personally to introduce me to the farm and people. Also, we had a prior meeting in Oslo in December 2018 to discuss the precise plans. For someone who has not met Mrs. Gakii Mugendi before personally, it could be more difficult to work with Videoconferences in every decisionmaking process and get the spirit of Iburu as Mrs. Mugendi is not present in Kenya at the moment, but in Norway.

Someone with the ability of self-organized work, who appreciates a different task every day, an allrounder so to say with love to nature, an open heart and no high need for luxury could be in the perfect place for the home of Iburu offers peace, warmhearted people, a beautiful clean nature. It's just a perfect back-to-the-roots feeling where hard farmwork is on the shedule, no guarantee for electricity/WiFi and a hot shower. Here you can escape the stressful digital western life and plant and pick your food from the own chamber.

I personally identify and appreciate that farming lifestyle and the peace of mind that opens the focus for studying. That is why I decided to settle permanently in both countries: Germany and Kenya. I am now building my own company VALLEYtoSKY that is on the one hand selling Premium Tea and Outfits from Kenyan designers direct to Germany and on the other hand my longtime goal after finishing the Master would be to connect and organize for German universities who are interested to do field-research in our projects in Kenya.

That business idea is now focus of this semester's seminar about interdisciplinary entrepreneurship and is also planned to be linked to my master thesis that could be an intercultural comparison for example in attention focus between Germany and Kenya. Such a research would be a great benefit because sadly as we remember the famous article: most research in the academic field is based on data collected from W(estern)E(ducated)I(ndustrialized)R(ich)D(emocratic) people, whereas the whose continent Africa is tremendously underrepresented. That can cause problems regarding the worldwide generality of research results. Also it is not only the people who we collect data from, but also on the side of the researcher, the way we believe research has to be done is influenced by cultural norms. The way different people try to understand the world is through the glasses of our own culture.

Orga-tipsps for your trip

- tourist e-VISA : <http://evisa.go.ke/>
- main religion in Kenya : Christianity (yes, for some including church on Sunday)
- cash withdrawing : Mastercard or VISA card, 1Cent is slightly more than 1Kenyan shilling
- health insurance : for example within Germany + ADAC travel insurance